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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: LIEBERMAN INDICTMENT SCENARIOS

REF: TEL AVIV 1717 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Luis G. Moreno, Reason 1.4 (b) (d)

¶1. (C) Reftel reported that the Israeli police recommended August 2 that Attorney General Mazuz indict Foreign Minister Lieberman on bribery, money laundering, obstruction of justice, and other charges. Political insider and media commentator Alon Pinkas (protect) reviewed the legal process with PolCouns August 13. Once Mazuz decides to accept the police recommendation, which virtually all Israeli observers believe he will, Mazuz must notify Lieberman in writing that he is about to be indicted. Mazuz would meet with Lieberman and his attorneys, and then schedule a hearing, following which a formal indictment would be issued. Pinkas thought Mazuz would make his decision by October, after the Jewish High Holidays. In that scenario, a formal indictment could take until the end of 2009 or early 2010.

¶2. (C) Mazuz, however, is due to leave office at the end of ¶2009. Pinkas said that Lieberman's attorneys could play for time, using the number of separate charges and huge amount of evidence collected by the police as an argument for a delay, which would put the hearing after Mazuz's departure from office. Pinkas commented that Mazuz is likely to want to issue the indictment against Lieberman before he leaves office, since it would be the last major corruption case to be handled by Mazuz, a man known for his determination to clean up Israeli politics by holding a series of very senior officials, including former President Katzav and former Prime Minister Olmert, to account. Mazuz also may want to restore the damage to his reputation that resulted from his indecisive handling of accusations of rape against Katzav by being tough on Lieberman, in Pinkas' view. Pinkas added, however, that Mazuz's successor as Attorney General, no matter who he or she turns out to be, will also almost certainly want to indict Lieberman early on in order to demonstrate a similar commitment to justice and accountability by the high and mighty.

¶3. (SBU) Comment. While an actual indictment may not be issued until next year, Mazuz's office announced August 17, in response to a letter from an organization demanding that Mazuz force Lieberman to resign, that Lieberman may legally retain his ministerial post until a decision to indict has been made. Based on this statement, it appears to us that Mazuz believes that Lieberman will have to resign once Mazuz makes a decision to indict as opposed to when the actual indictment is issued. If so, Lieberman may have to step down in the fall, though precise dates are impossible to predict at this point.

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